

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2021

Councillors Present: Hilary Cole, John Harrison, Rick Jones, Barrie Patman, John Porter and Bill Soane

Also Present: Paul Anstey (Head of Public Protection and Culture), Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager - Commercial), Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager), Stephen Brown (Wokingham Borough Council) and Moira Fraser (Public Protection Partnership)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Eric Owens

PART I

1 Minutes

The minutes from 13th September 2021 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

3 Notice of Public Speaking and Questions

No public questions were received.

4 Forward Plan

The following changes were noted for the December meeting:

- The CCTV and RIPA items would be combined into a single report on the Public Protection Surveillance Approach
- The air quality report for Bracknell would be slipped to this meeting as paperwork was still awaited from DEFRA.

5 Food Safety, Food Standards and Animal Feed Service Plan 2021 – 2022 (JPPC4060)

Sean Murphy outlined the background to the paper and the scope of the council's responsibilities in the protection of the food chain. Recent work had been dominated by responses to the pandemic (e.g. checking that Covid control controls were in place, responding to reports of restriction breaches and handling outbreaks). The service had dealt with around 2,000 additional Covid-related enquiries. The timeline to the service's Covid response was set out in the report. Routine inspections had halted in February 2020, but outstanding visits were being completed. The Food Standards Agency had provided guidance for authorities on how to prioritise work and a framework for recovery to March 2023. It was noted that Wokingham would be leaving the PPP in March 2022 after which time they would set their own arrangements.

Rosalynd Gater outlined the measures being taken. The first stage was linked with data cleansing of databases for food premises; particularly focussing on new (unrated) businesses which had opened during the pandemic and high risk establishments. Details

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were set out in the Recovery Plan. Where possible, inspections of lower risk establishments would also be carried out. The backlog would be handled by contractors and out of hours inspections. Also a questionnaire was being used for low-risk premises rather than visits. There were risks to the delivery, primarily from Covid and open vacancies which needed to be filled; there was a nationwide shortage of qualified officers.

Sean Murphy outlined the proposed Recovery Plan. He noted that food sampling was being carried out in support of food standards work. Funding would be drawn down where possible to support this work, but there would be significant risks, particularly in the event of changes to regulations or Covid controls.

Councillor Bill Soane asked whether officers in Wokingham would receive historic records for establishments in that area prior to their departure from the partnership. Sean confirmed discussions were already in progress to ensure a proper handover and the completion of the 2019/20 inspection programme.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- **NOTE** the work carried out by the teams
- **APPROVE** the 2021/22 Work Plan for Food Hygiene and Covid (section 4 of the Food and Feed Service Plan)
- **APPROVE** the 2021/22 Work Plan for Food Standards and Feed (Section 5 of the Food and Feed Service Plan).

6 Update on future working arrangements for the PPP (JPPC4132)

Paul Anstey outlined the key points of the report. He explained some of the discussions and decisions that had taken place: Wokingham had confirmed the budget proposals through the heads of terms and delegated authority for the traded services; the West Berkshire Executive had approved the recommendations to allow the traded services to progress; Bracknell had yet to consider the matter. He emphasised the need to do what was right by all three partners with no disproportionate or unnecessary costs. He set out the new relationship arrangements once Wokingham left the partnership. This would require changes to how business was conducted and how performance and finances were managed and reported. The monitoring principles would remain the same, working on the principle of cost recovery. It was noted that costs may vary, and would trigger discussions about budgets. He stressed the importance of openness and transparency.

It was noted that ICT presented challenges around data migration and data sharing. The aim was for the customer to receive a good service. Traded Services would inevitably require some data sharing arrangements. This would be addressed by the project governance proposals.

It was accepted that there would inevitably be additional burdens associated with changes to legislation that would trigger further discussions.

There would be changes to demand profiles as a result of Wokingham having in-house services and discussions were underway with Members regarding future priorities and how these would shape the Workforce Strategy.

There would be clear benefits for customers and officers from ICT improvements.

In terms of organisational change, the expressions of interest process was underway. This was scheduled to conclude on November 12th 2021. The aims were to minimise costs and redundancies resulting from the changes, and to ensure that Traded Services

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and the current vacancy listing were used to maximum effect to reduce financial risks for all parties.

Councillors Hilary Cole thanked Paul Anstey for all his hard work. Councillor Cole noted that negotiations had been delicate and difficult, but all parties were happy with the proposal. She stressed that the officer and management roles would be key and sought to reassure colleagues in Wokingham about the desire to maintain good service. Her comments were echoed by Councillor John Harrison.

The Committee **RESOLVED** within the context of the existing Inter Authority Agreement, and the future Traded Services Agreement to:

- **Approve** the Joint Management Board's role and governance approach as outlined in 5.14.
- **Approve** the approach to financial management and budget setting as outlined in 5.16.

7 **Air Quality Status Reports 2020 (JPPC4064)**

Sean Murphy presented the contents of the report. He highlighted that they were still awaiting the response to the Bracknell Air Quality Status Report and that this would be brought to a later meeting.

The Air Quality Status Reports were a legal requirement of local authorities under the Environment Act 1995 and associated regulations, which set Air Quality Objectives for different pollutants. Local authorities monitored local air quality through a network of monitoring stations to identify Air Quality Management Areas. For 2021, there were four continuous monitoring stations and 120 diffusion tube locations. Where there were exceedences of the Air Quality Objectives, local authorities were required to declare Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and produce Air Quality Action Plans – each of the three authorities had AQMAs. The local authorities were also required to submit Annual Status Reports to Defra – these were all submitted ahead of time, favourable feedback had been received on two of the reports, but feedback was outstanding on the Bracknell report. The Shared Service had been awarded a Defra grant and an Air Quality Officer had been appointed to deliver a range of projects, including PM_{2.5} monitoring. A further bid had been submitted and the result would be reported to a future meeting. It was noted that the shared experience across the three local authorities had been helpful.

Councillor Hilary Cole asked about WHO air pollution guidelines, which differed from UK guidelines, and whether the intention was to work towards meeting those in the future. Sean Murphy explained that the aim was always to get levels of pollution as low as possible, ideally towards the WHO levels, but achieving the objectives in the UK regulations as a minimum.

Councillor Barrie Patman noted the impact of Covid on the number of vehicles on the road and that this would make it difficult to discern the effectiveness of particular measures. Sean Murphy agreed that circumstances had been unusual. He explained that measurement had been ongoing throughout the pandemic, which had given an idea of pollution levels for different traffic levels. He noted that cars were not the only source of pollutants. He felt it would be interesting to see the impact of Covid vs the impact of electric vehicles and other measures to reduce air pollution.

Councillor Bill Soane asked if there was going to be any monitoring of Air Quality in the areas surrounding the new M4 smart motorway. Sean Murphy was aware of some monitoring, but offered to speak with colleagues to get a more detailed answer.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

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- **NOTE** the contents of the Report and the two separate Air Quality Annual Status Reports;
- **NOTE** the feedback from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the reports, and
- **NOTE** the progress on the measures to improve air quality set out in each report, and
- **APPROVE** the ongoing and planned future measures to improve air quality set out in each report.

8 Fireworks Operational Approach (LC4043)

Sean Murphy noted this item was on the agenda for information only.

The RSPCA had approached several local authorities about motions in relation to fireworks.

The report gave a summary of current activity and the role of the Shared Service. This included statutory duties around enforcement of the sale, storage and use of fireworks, but also engagement with organisers about informing the public and engagement with the public.

Councillor Hillary Cole highlighted that West Berkshire Council had considered a motion regarding fireworks and decided that an operational approach was the best solution, and the motion was considered to be too prescriptive. Members were provided with information so that they were well prepared when approached by residents with concerns about fireworks and their impact on pets. She stressed that pet owners needed to accept some responsibility for the welfare of their animals during local displays.

Councillor Rick Jones asked if there had been any feedback to this approach as yet. Sean Murphy said discussions were already happening with local event organisers, encouraging them to engage with sensitive sites (e.g. riding schools). Enforcement was ongoing regarding underage sales, etc. Fewer premises had registered to be allowed to sell fireworks this year than in previous years, but it was too soon to tell if this was a one-off or a sign of future trends.

9 Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be on 13th December 2021 in West Berkshire.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 7.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature